

India

IAF Officer Avani Chaturvedi becomes first Indian woman to fly fighter aircraft solo

- Scripting history, flying officer Avani Chaturvedi has become the first Indian woman to fly a fighter aircraft, an IAF official said.
- "Chaturvedi became the first Indian woman to fly a fighter aircraft solo when she flew a MiG-21 bison in her first solo flight," the official.
- She undertook the sortie from IAF's Jamnagar base on Monday, he said.
- Three women pilots, Chaturvedi, Bhawana Kanth and Mohana Singh, had undergone strenuous training programme to fly fighter jets.
- They were commissioned as flying officers in July 2016, less than a year after the government decided to open the fighter stream for women on an experimental basis.
- The IAF has already selected the next batch of three women trainee pilots for the fighter stream.

Gandhi Nagar in Jaipur becomes the country's first all-woman managed non-sub-urban railway station

- The Gandhi Nagar railway station in Jaipur, on Monday became the country's first non-sub-urban railway station to be fully-managed by women, officials of the North Western Railway Zone said.
- Gandhi Nagar is important railway station in Jaipur situated on the Jaipur-Delhi rail route with more than 50 trains passing through the station out of which 25 halting at the station.
- The station has footfall of more than 7,000 passengers every day.
- Tarun Jain, chief public relation officer of the zone, said the initiative of an all-woman railway station in the North Western Railway zone, was conceptualized by general manager Singh and divisional railway manager Saumya Mathur and other railway officials made efforts to make it a reality.
- Women staff has appointed in different posts, including points-women (who change the tracks), station manager, chief reservation supervisor, assistant reservation supervisor, inquiry counter and reservation clerk, ticket checker and at the station, Jain said.
- There is 40 women staff at the station besides women personnel of the railway protection force have been deployed at the station, he said.
- Being an all-woman railway station, sanitary napkin vending machine has also been installed at the station along with the ones installed at stations, including Ajmer, Udaipur, Abu Road, Bikaner and Sadulpur, Jain said.
- Last year, Matunga railway station in Mumbai was the first in the country to have deployed all-women staff at the station to manage all railway operations. It has now been entered in the Limca Book of Records 2018 for being manned exclusively by women staffers, a first on the Indian Railways. This initiative was started to empower women and create an environment where they can make their own decisions.

For garbage disposal, Bengal a model for the whole country

- Union Rural Development Ministry recently has sent instructions to all the state and union territory governments to study and implement the Bengal model.
- TMC Government in West Bengal has used the 100 Days' Work Scheme (NREGA) for garbage disposal by the Panchayats.

- The solid waste management system that the panchayats have implemented is both health-friendly and environment-friendly.
- West Bengal has also been acknowledged by the Centre as being the best in implementing the 100 Days' Work Scheme.

Government gives nod to 13-digit machine-to-machine SIM numbers from July 1

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has asked telecom service providers to start issuing 13-digit digit numbers for SIM-based machine-to-machine (M2M) services, which will co-exist with 10-digit numbers.
- The DoT had approved the scheme and a letter on it was sent to various departments on February 9, 2018.
- M2M services are those where Internet-enabled devices like point-of-sale machines or even latest refrigerators communicate through a SIM card. This decision will not have any effect on mobile phone SIMs.
- During the meeting, it was decided that 13-digit M2M numbering plan will be implemented from July 1, 2018. From this date onwards, all new M2M mobile connections will be allocated 13-digit numbers only.
- The DoT said all service providers must ensure that their network elements including IT and other relevant systems are aligned with 13-digit numbering for M2M SIMs before July 1, 2018.
- Migration of existing 10-digit M2M numbers to 13 digits will start latest by October 1, 2018 and shall be completed by December 31, 2018, it said.

NER's First Regional Centre for Agriculture to be inaugurated in Mizoram in March

- North Eastern Region' first Centre for Agriculture, with collaboration of Israeli expertise, is going to be inaugurated in Mizoram on March 7, 2018.
- Set up with a cost of Rs 8-10 crore, this centre is exclusively for processing of citrus fruits.
- The project has been set up with the tripartite collaboration of Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of Israel and Mizoram Government.
- Israel will provide expertise knowledge and professional support.
- Though located in Mizoram, this centre will cater to the whole north east.

India successfully conducts night trial of Prithvi-II missile

- India on February 21, 2018 successfully conducted night trial of indigenously developed surface-to-surface nuclear capable Prithvi-II missile off Odisha coast.
- The Strategic Forces Command of the Indian Army conducted the user trial of this 350 km range missile from a mobile launcher from launch complex-3 of the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur near Balasore in Odisha.
- The trial was a part of randomly selected regular training exercise by the armed forces which reconfirms the Army's readiness to fire it at short notice.
- This night trial of Prithvi-II came after successful trials of the Agni-5, Agni-II and Agni I in just over a month.

Light Transport Aircraft SARAS completes the second test-flight successfully

- India's indigenous light transport aircraft SARAS was successfully test flown for a second time on February 21, 2018. The flight took off from HAL's airport in Bengaluru for a text book flight.
- The flight test was commanded by Wing Commander U.P. Singh, Group Captain R.V. Panicker and Group Captain K.P. Bhat of Indian Air Force- Aircraft and System Testing Establishment.
- This was the second of the 20 test flights planned for SARAS PT1N, before freezing the production version.
- The first successful test was carried out on January 24, 2018.

Maharashtra Government to launch cheap sanitary pad scheme

- The state government of Maharashtra would be launching its new programme, 'Asmita Yojana' on the occasion of the International Women's Day on March 8, 2018 to provide cheap and subsidised sanitary pads to school girls and women.
- Under the scheme, girls studying in Zilla Parishad schools will get sanitary napkin packets at Rs 5, while rural women would be able to avail it at a subsidised rate of Rs.24 and Rs.29.
- The move comes at a time when attempts are being made to remove the taboo associated with the topic of menstrual hygiene by spreading awareness through various mediums including social networking sites, cinema and social campaigns.
- The Yojana was announced by the Minister of Rural Development, Women and Child Welfare Pankaja Munde in 2017.
- The Yojana aims to raise awareness regarding hygiene during periods, especially among girls between the age group of 11 and 19 years and also women in general in the rural areas of Maharashtra.

Union Government launches mobile app on Bamboo Housing & Construction

Hardeep Puri, Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs, on February 22, 2018 launched a Mobile App on "Bamboo Housing & Construction".

Launch of publication 'Building Materials and Housing Technologies for Sustainable Development'

- Hardeep Puri also launched a publication titled "Building Materials and Housing Technologies for Sustainable Development".
- The Publication contains 38 papers covering various subjects with the theme of the National Seminar.

National Seminar on 'Emerging Building Materials and Construction Technologies'

- All these launches were done on the occasion of the inaugural of the National Seminar on 'Emerging Building Materials and Construction Technologies'- the theme of the seminar. It was organized by Building Materials and Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC).
- The Seminar was organised to take stock of the new initiatives in the field of building materials & construction practices and provide opportunity to all the stakeholders to come together and share their experience & knowledge for the benefit of the nation at large.

India, France to jointly hold ISA Summit in March

- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) Secretary Anand Kumar on Thursday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and France President Édouard Philippe will jointly hold an International Solar Alliance (ISA) Summit at the President house in New Delhi on March 11.
- "It was conceived by India and jointly launch by India and France on the sidelines of Paris climate summit," Kumar said in a media briefing by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- The head of governments, representatives and ministers from 50 countries will also be attending the event.
- Kumar further said that two new programmes on scaling solar e-mobility and storage, and on rooftop solar will be inaugurated during the summit.

Finance and Banking

Centre announces special fund to strengthen power transmission in Arunachal Pradesh

- The Union Government has announced a special fund worth Rs 925 crore to strengthen the power transmission and distribution system in the state of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The announcement was made by the Union Minister of State for Power and New & Renewable Energy, RK Singh while chairing a review meeting of the power sector with senior officers of the state government in Itanagar on February 21.
- Singh said that the fund would be used for re-conductoring of old 11 KV lines and conversion of selected long LT distribution lines with 11 KV High Voltage Distribution System.
- The Union minister also added that of the 900 unelectrified villages across the country, about 600 lie in Arunachal.
- He further directed the officials to expedite the work to electrify every village in the state by May 1, 2018.

EPFO fixes interest rate at 8.55 % for 2017-18

- The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation, EPFO has declared 8.55 per cent interest rate for 2017-18 for its about 5 crore members.
- This was decided during the meeting of Central Board of Trustees of EPFO in New Delhi.
- For 2016-17, the rate was 8.65 per cent and in 2015-16 the rate was 8.8 per cent.
- In order to maintain the interest this fiscal, the organisation had sold a portion of its investment in the Exchange Traded Funds.

NITI Aayog Budget Allocation increased by more than 20 per cent

- As per Budget 2018, the allocations for the NITI Aayog have increased by more than 20 per cent to Rs 339.65 crore in 2018-19 from Rs 279.79 crore in 2017-18.
- Budget envisages a defined role for NITI Aayog in critical areas of artificial intelligence and agriculture policy, apart from reiterating a shared vision for national development in line with NITI Aayog's Three Year Action Agenda, the Seven Year Strategy and the 15 Year Vision Document.
- NITI Aayog, as the premier 'think-tank' of the Union Government has been crucial in navigating and charting the course of the country in matters of national and international importance.

Telangana, Taiwan sign MoU for better technology partnership

- The state government of Telangana on February 21, 2018 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Taoyuan City of Taiwan for better technology partnership in the state, as a part of the closing ceremony of the World Congress on Information Technology (WCIT) 2018.
- The agreement was signed and exchanged between the Principal Secretary to Government, Jayesh Ranjan and Director of the Board, Taoyuan City, Robert Huang in the presence of Telangana's IT Minister KT Rama Rao.
- Taoyuan is one of the fastest growing cities with respect to entrepreneurship, innovation and IoT and Government of Telangana have agreed to partner with it.
- Speaking on the occasion, KT Rama Rao stated that the WCIT, which was conducted in India for the first time, was a grand success with about 2,500 delegates attending it. He added that the new technologies will be beneficial to people and society at large and the state will go forward by using the technology in various sectors including health, education and agriculture.

Union Agriculture Ministry launches six new user friendly features of e-NAM Platform

The Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Radha Mohan Singh on February 21, 2018 launched six new features of National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) Platform with an aim to make it more users friendly.

The new and user-friendly features of the e-NAM platform are MIS Dashboard for better analysis, BHIM payment facility by traders, mobile payment facility by traders, enhanced features on Mobile App, integration of farmer's database, eLearning module in e-NAM website, etc.

1. e-NAM Mobile App
2. BHIM payment facility
3. New and improved Website with eLearning Module
4. MIS Dashboard
5. Grievance Redressal Management System
6. Integration with Farmer Database

Uma Bharti launches Bagori Ganga Gram & New Swajal Projects

- Union Minister of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Uma Bharti on February 20, 2018 launched the Bagori Ganga Gram project, New Swajal Project at Bagori and Gangotri as Swachh Iconic Place at Dunda village in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand.
- These both projects will create cleanliness, provide basic amenities to the people of Ganga bank villages and will also generate employment.

Bagori Ganga Gram project

- Open Defecation Free village Bagori is one of the 24 pilot Ganga Villages picked up to be transformed into Ganga Grams this year.
- Uma Bharti launched the Bagori Ganga Gram project, a solid and liquid waste management scheme with a total expense of Rs 11.88 lakh.

New Swajal Project at Bagori

- New Swajal Project was also inaugurated at Bagori with a budget of more than Rs 32 lakh. Swajal is a community owned drinking water programme for sustained drinking water supply.
- Currently, Swajal scheme is successfully running in village Sadag since 1996.

Union Government sets up 'NITI Forum for Northeast'

- The Union Government announced on February 21, 2018 that it has issued an order for the setting up of the 'Niti Forum for North-East'.
- The forum will have its Secretariat in the Ministry of DoNER.
- The forum will be co-chaired by the Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog and Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER).
- The main task of the forum would be to identify various constraints on the way of accelerated, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the North East Region of the country.
- It will also be required to recommend suitable interventions for addressing the identified constraints.
- It will also review the development status in the North East Region.
- It may also examine and address any other issue that is of importance.
- The forum would also be required to devise its own procedure to conduct its business/meetings/fields visits or constitution of Sub-Groups.

Reports & Indexes

India ranks 81st in global corruption perception index

- India has been placed at the 81st spot among 180 nations in the global Corruption Perception Index for 2017, which was recently released by Transparency International.
- The report has, in fact, named India among the worst offenders in terms of graft and press freedom in the Asia Pacific region.
- The index ranks 180 countries and territories on the basis of their perceived levels of public sector corruption.
- The index uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.
- The index placed India at the 81st place. In the 2016, India was ranked at the 79th position among 176 countries.
- India's score in the latest ranking, however, remained unchanged at 40. In 2015, the score was 38.
- According to Transparency International, in some countries across the Asia Pacific region, journalists, activists, opposition leaders and even staff of law enforcement or watchdog agencies are threatened, and in the worst cases, even murdered.
- The agency reports that in this respect, Philippines, India and the Maldives were found to be among the worst regional offenders.

India 7th most targeted nation for Web Application Attacks: Akamai Report

- India has been placed at the seventh spot in the list of targeted countries for Web Application Attacks (WAA), according to a new report titled 'Akamai State of the Internet Security Q4 2017' that released on February 21, 2018.
- The report states that nearly 40 per cent of over 53,000 cyber attacks in India occurred in the financial services sector during 2017.
- The report reveals that security incidents such as phishing, website intrusions and defacements, virus and ransomware have targeted the rapidly growing of the Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) sector in India.
- It also stated that the Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack frequency in the BFSI sector increased by 50 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2017 over the last quarter.
- It also placed India seventh in the list of the top source countries for WAA.
- While India maintained the same position in the third quarter last year, the attacks sourced saw a drop of approximately four million in number as compared to last quarter.

Sports

Norway's Bjoergen becomes most successful Winter Olympian

- Norway's Marit Bjoergen on February 21, 2018 became the most successful athlete in Winter Olympics history by clinching the bronze medal in cross country skiing's women's team sprint free.
- Kikkan Randall and Jessica Diggins won the gold and the first Olympic cross country title for the United States.
- Bjoergen's bronze with Maiken Caspersen Falla took her total tally to 14 Olympic medals, surpassing fellow Norwegian Ole Einar Bjoerndalen who has 13 in biathlon.

- The 37-year-old Bjoergen is also the second most successful woman at both Summer and Winter Games, trailing behind only Soviet gymnast Larisa Latynina who has won 18 medals.

Woman cricketer Harmanpreet to join Punjab police on March 1

- India's Twenty20 women's cricket team captain Harmanpreet Kaur is set to join Punjab police as a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) on March 1, 2018.
- This became possible after Indian Railways relieved Harmanpreet following her request to join Punjab police.
- She had resigned from the Railways last year. Her medical test for the post of DSP had already been completed but she could not join as Indian Railway did not relieve her.
- Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh had offered the DSP post to Harmanpreet in July 2017, following her scintillating performance in the Women's World Cup 2017.

ICC Rankings: Virat Kohli crosses 900 points in Tests, ODIs

- India captain Virat Kohli became only the second batsman after South Africa's AB de Villiers, in the history of the game to cross the 900-point mark in Tests and ODIs, as per latest ICC ODI player rankings.
- Pacer Jasprit Bumrah grabbed the joint-top position among bowlers.
- Kohli consolidated his top position with 558 runs in the 5-1 series win over South Africa, during which he slammed three centuries.
- Kohli is now a good 22 points ahead of Sachin Tendulkar, whose ODI career high was 887 points which came against Zimbabwe in January 1998.

Appointments

Gaku Nakanishi appointed as CEO of Honda Cars India

- Japanese auto major Honda Motor Co on Thursday announced appointment of Gaku Nakanishi as the president & CEO of Honda Cars India Ltd.
- Nakanishi, who will take over from incumbent Yoichiro Ueno, will assume the role from 1 April, consequent to the management changes announced annually by Honda Motor Co. Ltd, the company said in a statement.
- Ueno will move to New Business Strategy Division, Business Development Supervisory Unit in Honda Motor Co. Ltd for accelerating formulation of new business strategy and pursuit of open innovation in the area of future mobility, it added.
- During his tenure in India, Ueno was instrumental in fortifying the premium brand positioning of Honda and spearheaded introduction of several premium models in India including BR-V, Accord Hybrid, New City and WR-V, the company said.

Madhusudan Gopalan to be new P&G India MD & CEO

- FMCG major P&G India today announced appointment of Madhusudan Gopalan as its new Managing Director & CEO with effect from April 2018.
- Incumbent MD and CEO Al Rajwani is retiring on March 31.
- Gopalan is currently leading P&G business in Indonesia and his appointment would be effective from April 1, 2018.

- He has over 18 years of experience working for the company across business units and diverse geographies, P&G said in a statement.
- Rajwani is set to retire by the end of the financial year (March 31, 2018) from the P&G after 37 years of service, it added.

Days

International Mother Language Day 2018 observed globally

- The International Mother Language Day 2018 was observed across the world on February 21, 2018 with an aim to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.
- Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing the tangible and intangible heritage.
- The Day promotes the dissemination of mother tongues to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education with an aim to develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world.
- The theme of 2018 International Mother Language Day is 'Linguistic diversity and multilingualism count for sustainable development'.